

Vows to work towards securing high speed rail corridor for Cleveland-Pittsburgh

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WASHINGTON – Congressman Tim Ryan (OH-17) voted yesterday for the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (H.R. 6003) which attempts an ambitious reorganization of the troubled rail carrier. The measure will provide increased capital and operating grants to Amtrak, alleviate “choke points” in the passenger rail system, reduces Amtrak’s debt and finds new ways to capitalize on the carrier’s profitable routes. Two key measures of the bill, the development of state passenger corridors providing better intercity rail services and the authorization of 11 high-speed rail corridors were key to Congressman Ryan’s support.

“I believe that high-speed rail is the future of transportation in our state, and especially for Northeast Ohio,” said Congressman Ryan. “The construction of a high speed rail line that runs from Cleveland to Pittsburgh would be a watershed moment for our community. This is a logical step towards greater economic integration and the creation of the Tech Belt.”

In an effort to encourage the development of new and improved intercity passenger rail services, the bill creates a new State Capital Grant program for intercity passenger rail capital projects, and based on the New Starts transit capital program administered by the Federal Transit Administration. The bill provides \$2.5 billion (\$500 million per year) for grants to States to pay for the capital costs of facilities and equipment necessary to provide new or improved

intercity passenger rail. The bill also authorizes \$1.75 billion (\$350 million per year) for grants to States and/or Amtrak to finance the construction and equipment for 11 authorized high-speed rail corridors. The Federal share of the grants is up to 80 percent. The Secretary of Transportation would award these grants on a competitive basis for projects based on economic performance, expected ridership, and other factors.

“America has seriously lagged behind other industrialized nations in the creation of a high-speed efficient rail infrastructure,” said Congressman Ryan. “We are competing in a global marketplace where you can get from London to Paris, 211 miles away, in 2 ½ hours by rail. Shanghai in China boasts a train that can travel up to 267 miles per hour on magnets. I don’t see why we shouldn’t be able to get from Cleveland to Pittsburgh in about an hour.”